

ACADEMIC YEAR

**TO THE EX-EGYPTIAN P.I.
AND UNIVERSITY STAFF**

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ACADEMIC YEAR

a novel

Tous les monstres d'Egypte ont leur temple dans Rom



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Chapter 1

ENTER YE EGYPT, IF GOD WILL, SECURE

PACKET gazed into the noxious strip of oily water, struck with a kind of awe. How relieved, how glad he was to be . . . to be . . . well, yes, home! And almost more surprised to find the word 'home' rising in his mind.

On the other side of the boat lay the true blues of the Mediterranean. In front of him, seemingly hysterical men were hurling ropes at each other, yelling in a medley of Italian, Arabic and nautical English. Somewhere over there—beyond the forgotten crates, the fallen barriers and the anonymous customs shed—lay his flat, his bank, his friends, his lecture-room—and, of course, all that dust and dirt and noise which, it seemed, was less than unforgivable.

He had spent the greater part of his leave in England, a little sad and more than a little wet, and then a week in Paris, less sad but more expensive. And then he had travelled down to Naples to pick up an Italian boat bound for Alexandria. Unhappily the franc had devalued at the very moment he crossed the border, while the coyer lira had hesitated to follow suit. Spending the end of a vacation in Naples without money was at least an appetizer for the beginning of a fresh academic year. One meal of spaghetti a day, standing in embarrassing fashion against a white marble ledge affixed to a white tiled wall in a workmen's eating-house—and a nameless bed in an unnamed *albergo*. There